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Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the Junior Professional Officer/Associate Expert/ Associate Professional Officer Programmes in United Nations system organizations

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Junior Professional Officer/Associate Expert/Associate Professional Officer Programmes in United Nations system organizations" (JIU/REP/2008/2).

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JUNIOR PROFESSIONAL OFFICER/ASSOCIATE EXPERT/ASSOCIATE PROFESSIONAL OFFICER PROGRAMMES IN UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONS

Prepared by

Istvan Posta
Cihan Terzi

Joint Inspection Unit

Geneva 2008

United Nations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Junior Professional Officer/Associate Expert/Associate Professional Officer Programmes in United Nations system organizations

OBJECTIVE: To provide an overall assessment of the current situation of the JPO/AE/APO Programmes in the United Nations system organizations, including their legislative basis, rules and regulations and operational practice, and the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the programmes, and to recommend measures to improve their political, organizational and operational conditions.

Main findings and recommendations

These programmes, initiated almost five decades ago, have gone through a significant evolution enlarging their volume and scope. Today they are widespread across the United Nations system organizations, embracing almost 1,000 JPOs/AEs/APOs at any given moment, and the overall contribution of the donors to the programmes is about US$ 100 million per year. They have successfully served the complex set of objectives originally put forward: to provide additional resources for the development activity of the United Nations; to enhance the source of potential future experts and officials for the United Nations system and for donors' bilateral development programmes; and to offer on-the-job training possibilities for young professionals.

The participants in the programmes, that is, the donors, the organizations and the JPOs/AEs/APOs, all expressed great satisfaction with the ongoing implementation of the programmes. The organizations unanimously confirmed the very high standard and the continuous improvement in the quality of JPOs. The programmes are an important and flexible tool for the organizations, allowing them to address their changing needs in staff and programmatic priorities in the circumstances of severe budgetary constraints. This is particularly the case in the field offices and in certain newly emerging programmatic areas. Their impact on human resources management practice is significant.

Practice regarding the programmes has changed shape and emphasis in many respects, compared to the original concept, but the programmes remain relevant and are worth continuing and enhancing. The practical difficulties encountered during this review stem from the contradictions between the outdated legislative basis and the evolved practice, from the absence of clear and transparent priority setting in the organizations and the donor countries, and from the lack of coherent strategies and monitoring of their implementation. The operational difficulties of implementation can and should be addressed through better control and monitoring practices within the human resources management practices of the organizations.

The legislative basis of the programmes (Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 849 (XXXII) of 4 August 1961) should be revisited and adjusted to the changed realities of the development cooperation activity of the United Nations system. The gap between this general regulation and the evolved practice is significant. In this context, there is a need for the fine-tuning of the objectives and the guiding principles of the JPO/AE/APO assignments, as well as the principles of financing of the programmes. The general ownership and the visibility of the programmes for the Member States should be strengthened.

The number of JPOs/AEs/APOs coming from developing countries is low: in most cases, the programmes are open only to the nationals of donor countries. There are serious political and professional arguments regarding the need to remedy this situation, and a set of measures is needed to enhance the sponsoring of candidates from developing countries.

The formulation of the strategy and priorities of the programmes in the organizations is weak, and the evaluation practice should be strengthened. System wide attention is needed to strengthen the follow-up of the careers of former JPOs/AEs/APOs, and to improve cooperation among the recruitment services to make better use across the system of JPOs after their assignment.

The evolution of the programmes has resulted in more harmonized conditions of service, the application of standardized eligibility criteria, job descriptions, and supervision and appraisal of the individual JPOs/AEs/APOs. More attention is needed from human resources management to monitor and control the implementation of the programmes, especially at the beginning and concluding phases of the term of assignment.

Listed below are the recommendations for the consideration of the legislative bodies. Other recommendations (recommendations 4 to 9) proposed for the consideration of executive heads and the Human Resources Network of the Chief Executives Board (CEB) can be found in the main text of the report.

Recommendations for the consideration of the legislative bodies

Recommendation 1

The Economic and Social Council should revisit its resolution 849 (XXXII) of 4 August 1961, which serves as a policy basis for the JPO/AE/APO Programmes, and redefine the objectives, the guiding principles of assignment and the principles of financing of the programmes, with the aim of updating them to reflect current realities (paras. 37-49).

Recommendation 2

The Economic and Social Council should encourage the development of modalities to provide more visibility for the JPO/AE/APO Programmes, and thus strengthen the support of the Member States for these programmes (paras. 50-53).

Recommendation 3

The Economic and Social Council should encourage the elaboration of a set of proposals to increase the funding possibilities for candidates from developing countries to participate in the JPO/AE/APO Programmes (paras. 54-63).

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY		iii
	ABBREVIATIONS		vi
I.	INTRODUCTION	1-15	1
II.	OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMMES	16-36	3
	A. Objectives and dynamics	16-19	3
	B. Satisfaction of the major stakeholders	20-28	3
	C. Relevance and impact	29-36	5
III.	DETAILED FINDINGS	37-126	7
	A. Legislative framework for the JPO Programmes in the United Nations system organizations	37-41	7
	B. Geographical and programmatic areas of assignment	42-45	8
	C. Length of assignment and cost sharing	46-49	9
	D. Low visibility and lack of general ownership	50-53	9
	E. Composition of JPOs	54-63	10
	F. JPO Programmes in the United Nations organizations	64-126	12

ANNEXES

I.	Table 1	26
II.	Table 2	27
III.	List of donors	29
IV.	Overview on action to be taken on recommendations	30

ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
AE	Associate Expert
APO	Associate Professional Officer
CEB	Chief Executives Board of the United Nations system organizations
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HRN	Human Resources Network (of CEB)
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
NCE	National Competitive Examination
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODA	official development assistance
TC	Technical cooperation
TOR	terms of reference
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP JPOSC	United Nations Development Programme Junior Professional Officer Service Centre (Copenhagen)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSSC	United Nations System Staff College in Turin
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

I. INTRODUCTION

1. As part of its Programme of Work for 2008, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) undertook a review from February to July 2008 entitled "Junior Professional Officer/Associate Expert/Associate Professional Officer Programmes in United Nations system organizations".

2. The review's objective is to provide an overall assessment of the current situation of the JPO/AE/APO Programmes in the United Nations system organizations, including their legislative basis, rules and regulations and operational practice, as well as the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the programmes.

3. The Associate Experts Programme was an initiative of the Government of the Netherlands in its framework cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 1954, aimed at providing "associate experts" at entry level as additional resources free of charge to the FAO projects, and also to provide an opportunity for on-the-job training under qualified supervision to young, academically trained professionals.

4. Encouraged by the success of FAO-Netherlands cooperation, other United Nations agencies and donors expressed their interest in similar schemes, and a United Nations system-wide concept was introduced in ECOSOC resolution 849 (XXXII) of 4 August 1961. In the internal documents of the United Nations organizations, as well as in the related documents of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), this resolution is considered the legislative basis of the JPO/AE/APO Programmes. For easy reference and simplicity, we will refer to the JPO/AE/APO Programmes in this review as the Junior Professional Officer Programmes (JPO Programmes).

5. In the context of this review, by JPO Programmes we mean programmes jointly run by the United Nations organizations and the donors. The JPO Programmes provide the organizations with qualified young professionals for entry-level positions, who have completed their education and have some limited working experience, to assist in the implementation of the technical cooperation and other day-to-day activities of the United Nations system organizations. The assignment of JPOs is for a fixed term, usually from two to four years. The JPOs are considered staff members and are subject to staff rules and regulations, but the donor countries cover all the costs associated with the work and training programme of the JPOs, including the administrative and support costs of the organizations. The organizations undertake that the programmes, besides the normal everyday participation in the work of the organizations, also contain well-designed learning and training elements for the JPOs.

6. Today these types of programmes can be found in most of the United Nations system organizations. At the end of 2007, 933 JPOs were employed in 20 United Nations organizations (see table 1). Their numbers are significant among the overall entry-level professional posts in certain organizations. JPOs are assigned both in the field and in headquarters; they are involved in most of the activity areas of the United Nations, providing operational, analytical and normative activity in support of development programmes, in economic and social areas, humanitarian affairs, human rights, trade and development, drugs and crime, peacekeeping, post-conflict activities, political affairs and other areas.

7. Similar types of programme are also run in international organizations outside the United Nations system, e.g., the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Union.

Methodology

8. In accordance with the internal standards and guidelines of JIU and its internal working procedures, the methodology followed in preparing this report included a detailed desk review, questionnaires, interviews and in-depth analysis.

9. The Inspectors also used the documentation of the biennial meetings of National Recruitment Services and United Nations organizations on the Associate Expert/JPO/APO Schemes;[1] the Italian, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch and Swiss national evaluations; and the results of the comprehensive statistical overviews of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Development Programme JPO Service Centre (UNDP-JPOSC).

10. After the identification of the organizations with a significant JPO Programme, a detailed questionnaire was sent to 12 organizations, followed by personal or telephone interviews with most of them. During this process, the Inspectors met with the units responsible for the operation of the programme, line managers employing the JPOs, immediate supervisors of the JPOs, and the JPOs themselves. The experience of these interviews in many respects reinforced the results of those surveys which had been carried out earlier – in a different time frame and with different objectives and scope - by some donors and organizations. Based on this experience, the Inspectors are of the opinion that they have received a representative and sufficient overview of the operational experiences of the programmes across the system.

11. The Inspectors also approached 10 donor countries of the JPO Programmes seeking their opinions and views on their experience of recent years, as well as their strategy and vision concerning the future operation of the programmes. The written answers received, personal interviews and teleconferences with the representatives of the donor countries, have enabled the Inspectors to take into account the general thinking of the donor community on JPO Programme-related issues.

12. Comments from the participating organizations on the draft report have been sought and taken into account in finalizing the report.

13. In accordance with article 11.2 of the JIU statute, this draft report has been finalized after consultation among Inspectors so as to test its conclusion and recommendations against the collective wisdom of the Unit.

14. To facilitate the handling of the report and the implementation of its recommendations and monitoring thereof, annex IV contains a table indicating whether the report is submitted to the organizations concerned for action or for information. The table identifies whether the recommendations require a decision by the organization's legislative or governing body or can be acted upon by the Executive Heads of the Organizations.

15. The Inspectors wish to express their appreciation to all who assisted them in the preparation of this report, and particularly to those who participated in the interviews and so willingly shared their knowledge and expertise.

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[1] The biennial meetings of the National Recruitment Services and the United Nations organizations participating in the JPO Programmes are organized under the auspices of the United Nations, within the context of the Human Resources Network of the CEB, with UNDESA having the responsibility for providing all secretariat functions.

II. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMMES

A. Objectives and dynamics

16. The JPO Programmes in the United Nations system aim to achieve complex objectives. While the emphasis may vary from organization to organization, they are generally considered as a means to: (a) provide additional financial resources to contribute to the United Nations and related agencies technical cooperation programmes, or activity in general; (b) gain or develop a source of potential future experts and officials for the United Nations system and for the donors bilateral development programmes; (c) provide on-the-job training and learning possibilities for young professionals who have completed their academic studies, but who have limited or no experience in the technical cooperation programmes of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

17. The JPO Programmes have evolved significantly throughout the last five decades, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The Inspectors have not found precise statistics to describe the evolution of the programmes during this time, but documents indicate that the number of JPOs across the system has increased steadily since their inception. Later the volume fluctuated, subject to the budgetary situations of the donors, but several hundreds of new JPOs entered into the programmes annually. During the last five years, at any given time, there were about 1,000 JPOs employed involving more than US$ 100 million of funding annually (see the tables in annexes I and II). Thus, since the inception of the programmes, more than 10,000 JPOs have worked in the organizations.

18. Looking at the dynamics of the last five years, the number of JPOs in those organizations having significant JPO Programmes remained stable, and the overall amount of funds involved in their financing slightly increased. There are some organizations where the number of JPOs decreased (FAO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)). However, this is related not so much to the programmes themselves, but to the changes in the thematic priorities of the donor countries, or to the internal dynamics of the composition of donors of the given organization.

19. The circle of donor countries basically remains the same; their number changes from year to year, but in general varies around 30. The number of new JPOs financed by a particular donor varies from one to 50 per year, and the composition of donors is different from organization to organization, motivated by their preferences. During the last few years, a slight enhancement of the donor circle can be observed, although the number of JPOs continues to be determined by the traditional major donors. (An indicative list of donors is in annex III.)

B. Satisfaction of the major stakeholders

20. All the major stakeholders of the programmes, namely the organizations, the donors involved, and the JPOs themselves, expressed great satisfaction and appreciation for the programmes.

21. The organizations unanimously confirmed the very high quality of the JPOs. Throughout the years, the quality of the candidates has increased significantly as a result of the strong and open competitive process in the donor countries. In contrast to earlier decades, JPOs cannot any longer be considered as absolute beginners in their professional life. Today the average profile of a JPO can be described as a strongly committed, dynamic person, who

is academically highly qualified, sometimes with a post-graduate degree or PhD (started or concluded), able to speak two or three languages, and having some years (two to four) of work experience, often directly related to international or development cooperation.

22. The participation of the organizations in the final selection of the JPOs is also an important factor in improving the quality of the selection and contributing to the high satisfaction rate of the organizations.

23. From the point of view of the organizations, the programmes are not only an additional form of support to the United Nations system, but an effective tool helping to bridge the existing capacity gap in human resources, and/or to adjust it to the actual and quickly changing needs of their activity. Within the funding limitations established by individual donor countries, it is a flexible and relatively quick tool to enlarge the human resources capacity of an organization in new priority areas identified by the United Nations organizations. From the identification of the need to the entry on duty, the time lapse is less than a year, and the selection process is concluded in most cases within six months. This timeframe is extremely favourable in comparison to obtaining a new budgeted post for a given area of activity, or to the length of the selection process through the National Competitive Examination (NCE) or other recruitment processes at entry level.

24. Besides the obvious budgetary benefits, the relatively short recruitment timeframe is a strong motivation for the organizations to present a wide scope of requests for JPOs to the donors. It explains the expressed desire and efforts made by almost all organizations to increase the volume of their JPO Programmes.

25. The donors finance the JPO Programmes from the official development assistance (ODA) of their Government. They closely monitor the programmes and generally are satisfied with their practical implementation. Different donor countries formulate different emphases and priorities in their programmes. Some donors use these tools to provide additional resources for certain programmatic areas and/or to certain geographical locations being prioritized by their development policy; others try to improve the operational conditions of the organizations in newly emerging areas such as climate change, humanitarian affairs, gender issues, etc. By some, it is considered as an additional tool to remedy their under-representation in the staff of the international organizations; others see it as a source to gain internationally trained personnel for their national development machinery.

26. The source of satisfaction for the donors is that they are in a position to continuously monitor and control the implementation of their priorities. The largest donors make periodic evaluations of their programmes, and according to changes in circumstances, they modify their priorities or reformulate the scope and focus. The Inspectors have the impression that, in this context, the large donor countries have a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating whether their programmes serve their purpose than do the organizations with large numbers of JPOs on board.

27. The Inspectors held interviews with JPOs in all organizations visited, and they were selected randomly as far as their nationality, occupational group or place of assignment were concerned. The overwhelming majority of the JPOs gave a positive opinion on their personal experiences, and regarded the programmes from their perspective as an excellent and challenging opportunity. Most of them considered that their jobs corresponded to their expectations and qualifications, and very few of them had criticisms of a systemic nature. Some JPOs complained that their skills and qualifications were under-utilized, but this cannot be considered a general phenomenon. In general, the JPOs felt that they had more challenging tasks and greater responsibility in the field than at headquarters. Their opinions were very

similar to the results of the surveys carried out by the UNDP JPOSC over the last few years[2] (i.e., the most representative surveys the Inspectors had access to in the organizations), and to some of the surveys carried out earlier by the donors.

28. However, a number of JPOs did express certain critical remarks or concrete complaints based on their personal experiences. Most of the complaints were related to the period of entry and the concluding phase of their assignment, and most frequently concerned the difficulties they had had to face in connection with administrative arrangements or supervision. Obviously, the Inspectors could not make judgements on the concrete cases, but they used these opinions to formulate their proposals to improve the monitoring and control of the operation of the programmes.

C. Relevance and impact

29. The Inspectors did not find any concrete evaluation of the contribution of the JPO Programmes as a whole on the programme delivery capability of the organizations. However, the line managers and regional officers interviewed stated without any hesitation that the contribution of the JPOs is significant at the micro level. It is particularly so in small field offices, in concrete country development or other projects, and in new emerging programmatic areas, where the regrouping of the budgetary or human resources need lengthy and complex administrative measures or decisions.

30. The impact of the JPO Programmes is more visible in the framework of human resources. Although 1,000 JPOs is not a significant number, taking into account the overall number of United Nations Professional staff (21,712 Professional staff appointed for one year or more in the JIU-participating organizations), their proportion is quite significant if we take their number compared with the entry-level Professional posts (2,839 Professional staff at the P-1 and P-2 levels).[3]

31. The United Nations system organizations statistics cannot provide any system-wide data on the employment of former JPOs across the system, since the CEB human resources database does not contain such elements. It is to be noted that staff with an NCE background, in spite of representing a smaller number, are included in the CEB human resources database. Moreover, during the interviews with supervisors, the Inspectors found a number of persons making reference to their experience as former JPOs. Some trends and information can also be extracted from data gathered from the JPO Alumni Association created and managed by UNDP JPOSC since 2003.

32. Some donor countries referred to their own statistical data, providing evidence that a high percentage of their national staff currently in the organizations had served earlier as JPOs. The organizations' statistics also show - although they are not calculated on a unified and comparable basis - that the retention rate of former JPOs was between 30 and 80 per cent, differing very much from organization to organization and year to year. All this indicates that the programmes have an impact on the recruitment practices of the organizations.

33. Taking into account all these findings, the Inspectors consider the JPO Programmes to be successful and beneficial for all the parties involved. The programmes enlarge the delivery capability of the United Nations organizations; they are a tool for increasing the flexibility of the organizations to react quickly to the changing needs of staff and new programmatic

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[2] www.jposc.org/content/JPO/survey-en.html.
[3] Personnel Statistics, CEB/2007/HR/15, dated 15 October 2007.

challenges; and they have a visible impact on human resources management practice. There is good reason to believe that the impact of the programmes is, in general, stronger than the relatively modest size of funds would indicate.

34. The Inspectors consider the following elements of the programmes to be particularly strong:

- high satisfaction rate of the stakeholders
- open and competitive selection process
- high quality of the candidates
- strong working relationship between donors and the organizations
- increasing harmonization in the conditions of service
- service-providing attitude of the units running the programmes, and
- strong field orientation of the programmes, in particular the emphasis on Africa.

35. The Inspectors identified the following weak points of the programmes, which require attention and action from the stakeholders:

- an outdated legislative basis
- lack of transparent strategies and priorities in the organizations
- low visibility and poor ownership of the programmes among the United Nations membership at large
- weak evaluation activity in the organizations, and lack of system-wide client satisfaction surveys based on uniform criteria
- inadequacy of the electronic information systems on issues related to the programmes
- a low level of system-wide cooperation among the recruitment services of the United Nations organizations on retention and career development, and
- an inadequate control and monitoring system of the individual difficulties of the JPOs, especially at the beginning and at the concluding phase of their assignment.

36. The Inspectors have found no political or operational problems questioning the usefulness of the programmes. They are convinced that the programmes remain relevant and are worth continuing and enhancing. The practical difficulties encountered during the review stem from the contradictions of the outdated legislative basis and the evolved practice, from the absence of clear and transparent priority setting in the organizations and the donor countries, and from the lack of coherent strategies and the monitoring of the implementation of the programmes. Some of the shortcomings in the programmes are also related to a lack of sufficient resources, both human and financial, which are needed to initiate and implement improved processes. The operational difficulties of implementation can and should be addressed through better control and monitoring practices within the human resources management practices of the organizations.

III. DETAILED FINDINGS

A. Legislative framework for the JPO Programmes in the United Nations system organizations

37. The legislative basis of the programmes is ECOSOC resolution 849 (XXXII) of 4 August 1961 on the use of volunteer workers in the operational programmes of the United Nations and related agencies designed to assist in the economic and social development of the less developed countries. In the resolution the Council "approves the use of volunteer technical personnel in the technical assistance activities of the United Nations ... and authorizes the Secretary-General and invites the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency to make use of voluntary personnel to the extent that requests for their services are forthcoming from the Government of the developing countries".

38. The annex to the resolution formulates the principles governing the use and assignment of volunteer technical personnel. Among others it states that:

- volunteers shall not be placed at the headquarters in any established posts
- volunteer personnel are subject to staff rules and regulations
- volunteers will have the legal status of an international civil servant
- the Government providing the volunteer shall be responsible for all identifiable costs.

39. The programmes started and have continued without major operational problems. The difficulties that arose during their initial implementation were handled through case-by-case operational decisions without revisiting the original resolution. Some important operational issues were regulated later, in the note approved by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on the Conditions of Service for Associate Experts and Junior Professional Officers,[4] and through the internal rules of the organizations. The United Nations legislative bodies did not put on their agenda issues related to the implementation of the above-mentioned ECOSOC resolution, and the programmes were never reviewed. In 1997, the General Assembly discussed the report of the Secretary-General on "Gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities",[5] in which the Secretary-General listed the Associate Expert Programme of the United Nations under the "Type I: gratis personnel with an established historical association with the United Nations". He reported that this type of gratis personnel, contrary to type II, has a "long history of association with the work of the Organization and their legal status and functions are well established". The General Assembly discussion was focused on type II, and type I gratis personnel were not dealt with by the resolution adopted on that occasion.

40. As the programmes developed and were enhanced through the years, a consultative mechanism, consisting of the National Recruitment Services of the donor countries, and the United Nations organizations participating in the JPO Programmes evolved, which through its biennial meetings tried to determine the desirable course of action, with a view to responding to questions arising. It proved to be an extremely useful tool for the exchange of views and best practices among the donors and the organizations.

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[4] ACC/1985/6 and ACC/1985/PER/R.17.
[5] A/51/688.

41. It was especially useful for the harmonization of the conditions of service, for the standardization of certain administrative procedures like the preparation of terms of reference (TOR) for posts, harmonization of the eligibility criteria, supervisory activity, strengthening of training and learning elements, etc. Although this mechanism is only able to produce concrete results over a relatively long period, due to its special nature (interagency, intergovernmental and consultative), the Inspectors consider it a successful and valuable tool of the programmes.

B. Geographical and programmatic areas of assignment

42. As a result of their evolution over the years, the programmes today differ in many respects from how they were planned or envisaged. Originally, they were almost exclusively field and technical cooperation oriented. Today, more and more JPOs are headquarters based (approximately one third of the assignments). The changing nature of technical cooperation (TC) in the organizations, the increase in national execution of TC, and the requirements of global programmes may justify an increased placement of JPOs in headquarters, to enhance the capacity of the organizations to deal with a broad range of substantive issues and processes in a more efficient way.

43. An increasing number of JPOs are employed in areas not directly linked to traditional TC activity. The financial constraints of the organizations have generated an increased interest and demand from management to use JPOs even in core areas of work, like peace and security, trade and development, human rights or humanitarian affairs, in addition to operational activities, and extended to policy formulation, analytical and normative activities. Many of these activities are viewed as related in one form or another to capacity development, including when the final output strengthens the organization's activities in supporting developing Member States.

44. Some donors are not only open to such shifts in the assignments of JPOs, but due to their changing priorities, they are also interested in headquarters assignments, or assignments in areas outside direct TC activity. Donors' new preferences, namely, to offer JPOs for newly emerging areas such as the environment, governance, climate change or gender issues, very often coincide with new priorities in the activity of the organizations, and field-office assignments are less attractive to achieve these aims. In the case of an underrepresented donor country, for whom achieving a better possibility of retention is also a high priority, a clear preference is given to a headquarters posting, or to an area with a wider scope of activity. The figures in table 2 clearly indicate the strengthening of these trends.

45. The Inspectors note that, although among a significant number of donors and organizations there is a continued interest in using the programmes for field-related work, assignments to headquarters or to other non-TC activity related assignments cannot any more be considered an exception. They recognize that this evolution is justified, and it is not their intention to reverse this trend if it is in the interests of the organizations. However, since the evolving practice is different from the major parameters of the original legislative basis, the resolution should be adjusted to this reality. It is a matter of principle that the practice followed by the management in any activity of the organizations should be in conformity with the basic parameters of the policies adopted by Member States. Additionally, the frequent use of exceptional procedures in the United Nations Secretariat, i.e., case-by-case approval for headquarters assignments, means an additional administrative burden.

C. Length of assignment and cost sharing

46. Similarly, the Inspectors noticed a widening practice of the extension of the original two-year assignment of JPOs for an additional year in certain organizations. Generally, this is initiated by the organizations and motivated by the staffing situation or efficiency arguments. Some donor countries are willing to do so, subject to a cost-sharing agreement between the donor and the organization for the extended period. While there can be justifiable reasons and interest on the part of the organizations (and the entities financed primarily from voluntary contributions are more willing to be flexible in that regard), the resolution in force should be modified to reflect this reality.

47. Some managers complained that more than once, a donor country has proposed to extend the financing of a JPO for an additional year, subject to a commitment from the organization that the JPO would be offered a regular post after the expiration of the extension. The Inspectors consider that such endeavours are inconsistent with the regular terms of the JPO Programme, and represent a clear violation of the existing rules of recruitment through open competition, and such attempts are incompatible with the objectives and principles of the programmes.

48. The organizations and donors have different motivations and objectives for participating in the programmes. When they were initiated, the formulation of the objectives was vague and very general. Today, with vast experience on the running of the programmes, Member States are in a better position to formulate more detailed objectives and guiding principles of assignment and the principles of financing.

49. The Inspectors believe that it is possible to incorporate the interests of the organizations, the donors, the developing countries and the JPOs themselves into a new resolution, by creating a more coherent and updated legislative basis. By doing so, it would eliminate the inconsistencies between the ECOSOC resolution in force and established practice, and would create a solid general basis from which the organizations across the system could rearrange the regulation of their own programmes. It would secure a commonly agreed basis adjusted to the present realities of development cooperation, while giving sufficient room for the organizations to take into account their specificities. It would increase the support of the programmes by Member States at large, thus contributing to their relevance and efficiency.

The implementation of recommendation 1 below is expected to enhance accountability.

Recommendation 1

The Economic and Social Council should revisit its resolution 849 (XXXII) of 4 August 1961, which serves as a policy basis for the JPO/AE/APO Programmes, and redefine the objectives, the guiding principles of assignment and the principles of financing of the programmes, with the aim of updating them to reflect current realities.

D. Low visibility and lack of general ownership

50. The programmes have not been discussed or evaluated at the level of the legislative bodies of the organizations since their inception, in spite of their significant development in volume and scope. In a very few cases, one paragraph related to the programme has been

included in the annual report on the activity of an organization, thus giving some basic figures on its volume, or it has been mentioned in the context of the human resources management report. The Inspectors have found that, with the exception of a few organizations, the programmes have not received adequate attention from the higher level of management. The programmes are known basically to the units responsible for running them, and to the immediate supervisors of the JPOs.

51. The operational personnel and representatives of the donors (through their established informal but closed consultation mechanism) have been able to address the most urgent operational problems and to find a modus vivendi, but in general there is a lack of knowledge and information in the wider circle of Member States. Most of the latter, including the beneficiary developing countries, are not included in the discussions on these issues. Even in the field offices, the beneficiary country has no information on the JPO Programmes since they appear in the form of an overall United Nations contribution.

52. The insufficient information on the operation and usefulness of the programmes, and lack of knowledge of their importance to and impact on the activity of the organizations, including programme delivery and human resources management, make it difficult to generate more political and financial support among the Member States at large. In a sense, the lack of attention from Member States generates the lack of attention of the higher management of the organizations.

53. The Inspectors note that the units of the organizations in charge of the programmes have made, and continue to make, efforts to increase the attention of the non-donor countries. There are continuous efforts to involve newly emerging donors as well as middle-income developing countries in sponsoring the programmes. Some organizations are already very close to concluding concrete bilateral agreements with new donors, which would be an important step in widening the donor circle. However, these contacts are usually not on a political level, and in themselves do not resolve the problem of trying to increase the wider support and involvement of the Member States at large.

The implementation of recommendation 2 below is expected to enhance controls and compliance.

Recommendation 2

The Economic and Social Council should encourage the development of modalities to provide more visibility for the JPO/AE/APO Programmes, and thus strengthen the support of the Member States for these programmes.

E. Composition of JPOs

54. The overwhelming majority of JPOs are the nationals of donor countries. The number of JPOs coming from the developing countries is extremely low. In the organizations having significant JPO Programmes, their number is 306 out of 4,544, or 6.7 per cent of the total (see table 2). In some organizations it is slightly higher, but the number depends on the structure of the donor community rather than on the intention of the organizations. The figures have never been high, but during recent years they have declined significantly.

55. This situation is a result of the reality that at present, only a few donor countries make open their programmes to candidates from developing countries. Since 2004, the Netherlands has offered 50 per cent of the JPO posts financed from its budget to candidates from developing countries (previously it was 30 per cent), and in lesser proportions Belgium, Italy and Luxembourg sponsor developing-country candidates, too. This number was higher several years ago, but against the overall decrease of resources, some donors have stopped sponsoring the participation of non-nationals in the programmes. Another important factor is that the Organisation internationale de la francophonie, which provides financing for developing-country candidates, does not participate in the programmes any more.

56. The Inspectors note that during their discussions with the United Nations organizations, donors and the JPOs themselves, the necessity to increase the number of JPOs coming from developing countries was raised and received support. There was a general understanding that it is desirable from a political, as well as from a professional, point of view.

57. The Inspectors note that some organizations, guided by the desire to alleviate the existing under-representation of developing country nationals in the JPO Programmes, have designed special programmes, the Young Professionals Programme, for nationals from non- or underrepresented countries, financed from their regular budget. Although the Young Professionals Programmes are different to the JPO Programmes, their basic operational parameters (except the source of financing and eligibility) are quite similar to those of the JPO Programmes (age limit, duration, post descriptions, potential possibilities for future longer-term recruitment). While the magnitude of these initiatives is modest compared to the JPO Programmes, they reflect the significant efforts of the management of some organizations to address the issue of the geographical composition of young professionals. For example, 150 young professionals have been assigned to FAO in the framework of this programme since its inception in 1995.

58. The extension of the JPO Programmes to more candidates from developing countries would contribute to providing their nationals with training and experience in the area of international development cooperation, and enhance capacity building in developing countries for their national development and aid coordination. Meaningful results in that field would also increase the political and moral support for the programmes at large, and result in concrete benefits for the short and long-term success of development-related activity.

59. The issue was discussed at the last two meetings of donors and the United Nations organizations, and although there is an agreement in principle among them to make progress in that area, no concrete results have been achieved so far. The donor countries have explained the lack of progress as owing to their current political and financial constraints. To change the existing regulations of the national programmes some donors need specific legislative actions which are difficult to achieve in the present economic and social environment; others are cautious due to their continued under-representation in the staff of the international organizations, or they continue to need experienced personnel in their own national development machinery.

60. The Inspectors note the commitment and openness of the donors to overcome these difficulties. They are aware that at the last meeting in Bern of the National Recruitment Services and United Nations organizations, there was an agreement to continue to study new ways of financing developing-country candidates, and proposals will be submitted for consideration at the next biennial meeting to be held in 2009. The Inspectors are looking forward to this meeting, where the donors are expected to formulate concrete proposals in that regard.

61. It is the view of the Inspectors that, additionally to such proposals, the formulation of an explicit expectation or recommendation by the United Nations legislative body that a certain proportion of the funds allocated to the JPO Programmes be offered by the industrialized donor countries for sponsoring developing country candidates would be conducive to progress in this field. In this context, the Inspectors recall the recommendations contained in the JIU report "Voluntary contributions in the United Nations system organizations" (JIU/REP/2007/1).[6] At the same time, it is their strong view that other alternatives to improve this situation should also be explored.

62. The establishment of a special Trust Fund for that purpose, with the involvement of some of the traditional or non-traditional donors, as well as international financial institutions, the private sector, international and private foundations, and development related non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is also an option worth looking into. Certain parts of voluntary contributions earmarked for a particular programmatic area in different United Nations funds and programmes could be allocated as a financial source for JPOs assigned to the implementation of that earmarked programme. Enhancing the circle of donor countries with the involvement of the emerging donors and the middle-income developing countries is also a possibility for increasing the number of JPOs from developing countries.

63. From discussions with the managers of the programmes and the representatives of donor countries, the Inspectors consider that results are achievable, provided that the political will of the donors is accompanied by the increased attention and support of the Member States at large, and a series of innovative, alternative ways of sponsoring candidates from developing countries is explored and institutionalized.

The implementation of recommendation 3 below is expected to enhance effectiveness.

Recommendation 3

The Economic and Social Council should encourage the elaboration of a set of proposals to increase the funding possibilities for candidates from developing countries to participate in the JPO/AE/APO Programmes.

F. JPO Programmes in the United Nations organizations

Lack of prioritization of requests by the organizations

64. Since the JPO Programmes in the United Nations system organizations are based on the same political and legislative basis, the established practice, including the aims, strategy and the rules and procedures of their implementation have many commonalities across the system.

65. One of the main driving forces of the programmes across the system is the efforts of the organizations to bridge the existing capacity gap in the field or in headquarters in the

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[6] JIU/REP/2007/1 Recommendation 5: The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations should request their respective executive heads to ensure that agreements negotiated with individual donor countries for associate expert/junior professional officer programmes include a funding component for candidates from under- and unrepresented countries.

circumstances of a permanent enhancement of the scope of activity, and severe budgetary constraints. As a result, the selection of the area of assignment of JPOs in general is very much donor-driven, i.e., almost any offer of the donor countries to finance JPO posts is welcomed. Additionally, in many instances, the programmes are considered by the organizations as a tool to build better general relations with the donors.

66. The number of requests for JPOs submitted to the donor community is significantly higher than the number of those accepted for financing. This proportion varies very much: there are organizations with the proportion of 3 to 1, while in others it is 7 to 1 or even higher. There is a very weak, if any, internal mechanism in force for checking whether the requests submitted to the donors correspond or not to the actual priorities of the organizations at any given time.

67. It was the Inspectors' impression that in many cases, the set of requests presented to the donors is a simple compilation of the requests coming from the different organizational units, who receive almost no substantial guidance or programmatic emphasis for the formulation of their requests. The proposals do not necessarily reflect the priorities of the organization, since to get the financing for an additional post is almost an overriding consideration. The Inspectors were informed that UNICEF and FAO pay significant attention to organizational priorities when advertising posts for the JPO Programmes. The Inspectors also learnt from some interviews that in the direct, basically oral communication with the donors, some organizations try to proactively influence the donors' decisions, but this has no systemic basis. These efforts are more often based on human resources management considerations, like the availability of proper supervisors or a bad earlier experience in a particular duty station, which are important, but demonstrate that decisions are rarely based on issues of programmatic considerations.

68. The managers of the programmes have expressed different views on the necessity or possibility of programmatic prioritization. Some argued that, due to the decentralization of activity of the organizations, it is impossible to exercise any control over the requests (except some quality controls, such as the formulation of job descriptions and TORs, or the availability of proper supervision). Others were of the opinion that with the existing budgetary constraints, additional resources like JPOs should be distributed equally among the different areas. Still others thought that more substantial priority setting should prevail in the JPO planning process.

69. The Inspectors are of the view that the programmes should reflect the priorities and interests of both the donors and the organizations. Therefore, it is desirable that the programmes, at least at the level of requests, should be planned according to the actual programmatic priorities of the organizations, and should not be left entirely to the donors. If requests were priority-based, there should be enough room to accommodate the preferences of the donors.

70. At the same time, most of the organizations have no clear and defined strategy to determine their objectives or priorities for the JPO Programmes, and for what purposes they want to use the JPOs. The Inspectors found documents of a policy or strategic nature only in UNDP (currently under review) and UNICEF. In all other organizations, the documents made available for the Inspectors are formulated with an emphasis on operational or administrative management issues, or simply give general information to the JPOs themselves. It is the Inspectors' view that this lack of vision and strategy is closely linked to the lack of attention to the programmes by higher management. In the absence of such strategy, the units responsible for running the programmes are not in a position to have a meaningful influence on the substance of the planning process.

The implementation of recommendation 4 below is expected to enhance effectiveness.

Recommendation 4

Executive heads should ensure that, in the framework of the human resources strategy, a clear policy and priorities are in place on the use of JPOs.

Harmonization of practice among the organizations

71. As a result of the ongoing dialogue between the donors and the organizations on a number of issues, well-elaborated standards endorsed by the biennial meetings of the National Recruitment Services and the United Nations organizations are used by the organizations in the operation of the programmes. These have helped to significantly improve the communication between the donors and the organizations in the planning of the programmes, selection of candidates, supervision, and to administer the JPOs' contracts and entitlements.

72. In this process, the most important tool proved to be the model agreement/memorandum of understanding elaborated by the meeting of donors and the United Nations organizations. This is a bilateral document regulating the basic legal conditions concerning the employment of JPOs of the given country. It sets out the obligations of the two parties, how to administer and finance the participation of the JPOs in the work of the organization, and the legal and administrative issues different from the general stipulations of the staff rules of the organization.

73. The Inspectors noted with satisfaction that the bilateral agreements concluded are very much based on the recommended model agreement, and only in a limited number of cases does the signed agreement contain different provisions. These usually reflect some particular financial or legal considerations connected with the national practice followed by the donor (for example, selection method, sponsoring candidates from developing countries, participation of the JPO in the United Nations pension fund).

74. During the last few years, significant achievements have been made in the harmonization of the eligibility criteria, application of standard job descriptions, guidelines for supervisory activity of the JPOs and in the preparation of the cost estimates of JPO posts, and the harmonization of conditions of service. This has resulted in the disappearance of most of the earlier, frequently seen, significant differences between the JPOs of different organizations working at the same duty stations.

75. However, the harmonization of conditions of service is still far from being complete. There still exist some, although not very significant, differences in shipment entitlements, duty travel and training allowance, the inclusion of accrued annual leave in cost estimates, and the application of hardship/hazardous duty station entitlements. These differences are partly due to the budgetary possibilities of the donors to finance the differences (for example, duty travel and training allocation), and partly due to the application of different entitlements by the organizations in their own staff rules (for example, Special Operation Allowance). Without underestimating the necessity to make further progress in resolving the remaining differences on these issues, it is the Inspectors' view that due to the joint efforts of the donors and the organizations, the harmonization of the conditions of service today is at an acceptable level.

76. Two issues of concern where differences still exist are the duration of assignment and the recruitment procedure for regular posts after assignment.

Term of assignment

77. The duration of assignment ultimately depends on the financial possibilities and priorities of the donors. At present, donors generally offer the minimum JPO assignment of two years. Most of the donors are ready to extend the JPO contract for a third year, although some of them do this only upon the organization's request, and subject to cost sharing with the organization. Sometimes it is done at the expense of reducing the number of new JPOs offered by the donor in the given year. An assignment of longer than three years is rare, and foresees in general assignment at two different duty stations.

78. The organizations in general are interested - using the argument of work efficiency considerations - in assignments of three years. Some organizations are flexible about the cost sharing practice, especially the United Nations funds and programmes, which use for that purpose some available voluntary contributions. However, the United Nations Secretariat and some specialized agencies with fewer possibilities of voluntary contributions, or with more restrictive internal regulations in force, may find it more difficult, or impossible, to extend assignments.

79. The Inspectors share the efficiency considerations expressed by the organizations, and would go along with a three-year assignment, although they consider that it is rather more a desirability than a must. The organizations should decide on their preferences when they formulate the strategy to follow with their JPO Programmes, taking into account that it might have an impact on the number of new JPOs offered to them in a year.

80. It is the Inspectors' view that the issue of cost sharing should be addressed in the framework of revisiting the ECOSOC resolution (see recommendation 1 above). It would then be up to the organizations, in consultation with the donors, to decide on the use of this construction and initiate any change in their own internal regulations, should they deem it necessary. Recognizing the differences in the mandates and the funding regulations among the United Nations entities, it is not the intention of the Inspectors to pursue a unified practice on cost sharing among the organizations. However, they consider it necessary to have clear and transparent rules in all the organizations on that issue. It should also be taken into consideration that a different regulation on the applicability of cost sharing could increase the already existing competition for JPOs among the organizations.

Recruitment after assignment

81. The Inspectors received the most critical remarks on the different and controversial regulations and practices concerning the recruitment of JPOs for regular or temporary posts in the organizations after the expiration of the JPO assignment. It is a matter of concern for all the players in the programmes. Although it is a common understanding of the organizations, donors and the JPOs that the JPO assignment does not mean any guarantee for future retention on a regular or temporary post, as the assignment comes to an end, in many cases there is a strong expectation from the donors and the JPOs themselves concerning retention. Sometimes this expectation is encouraged by the immediate supervisors, due to the overall very positive experience of the work of the JPOs.

82. This is also connected with the changing nature of the programmes and the composition of the JPOs. During recent years, the quality of JPOs has increased considerably, a significant number of candidates having a very good educational background, excellent language

knowledge and several years of work experience, and consequently showing a very high level of performance from the very beginning of their assignment. Most of them are not entry-level university graduates as was the case at the inception of the programmes, but in spite of being beginners in the United Nations organizations, from the very first moment most of them are already among the best qualified and best performing members of staff at their level. This situation is a direct consequence of the great popularity of the programmes in most of the donor countries, resulting in a very strong competitive selection process at national level. The number of eligible candidates for an advertised JPO post varies from 10 to 140 applicants per post, subject to occupational groups and place of assignment.

83. The general rule of recruitment for P-2 and P-3 positions is through an open competitive process. The major obstacle in recruiting JPOs for regular posts is the low number of available entry-level posts. In some organizations JPOs are treated as internal, in others as external candidates. In addition, the United Nations Secretariat recruitment process presupposes the candidate to have passed the NCE to be eligible for such posts. However, only candidates from non- or underrepresented countries are allowed to take the NCE.

84. Some of the donors give high priority to the retention of JPOs in the organization, with a view to improving their representation on the staff. Donors continuously request the organizations to secure the status of internal candidate for JPOs in the recruitment process, but there is no unified practice on that. The organizations, to the extent possible, try to keep the best JPOs through standard competitive recruitment for regular posts. Where there is a lack of regular posts, JPOs are frequently recruited for temporary posts or for short-term contracts, for example, to cover maternity or sick leave, but these are less attractive options.

85. Generally, there is a supportive attitude in the organizations towards the retention of the best-performing JPOs. Their highly recognized knowledge, in-house experience and professional performance are regarded as assets to the organizations. This is proven by the high - although different from organization to organization - retention rate. Most of the organizations recognize or openly declare that the JPO Programmes are a talent pool and important recruitment source; some others consider JPOs, from the recruitment point of view, only as a "useful side effect" of this form of development aid. The Inspectors have met in only one organization the practice where the programme is considered purely as a means for JPOs "to acquire professional experience within a multicultural environment in the subject in which they are qualified", and the recruitment regulation does not allow the short-term appointment of the programme participants after the assignment period. This measure was introduced against the background of an unbalanced geographical situation in the staff composition.

86. The fact is that different organizations can use this "resource" to a different degree. Besides the overall dynamics of the staffing situation of the organizations, the geographical composition of the staff and the related human resources policy regulations widen or narrow these possibilities. However, it is an overall view of the managers across the system that, due to the organizations' indirect investment into these professionals during their assignment, and for the long-term needs of the United Nations system, the high level, experienced JPOs should not be lost to the organizations. The present practice in many respects does not reflect this widely shared view.

87. The Inspectors are not in favour of giving a general waiver for the JPOs from the normal competitive process, including the NCE in the case of the United Nations Secretariat. That would jeopardize the integrity of the entry-level recruitment process. However, the Inspectors consider that the JPOs with the most outstanding performance during their assignment, among others due to the invested human and financial resources of the organizations, deserve the

special attention of the recruitment services of the organizations. Systematic efforts are needed, for example, through better career counselling and better interaction between the recruitment services of the United Nations system organizations, so that the JPOs with the best performance appraisal records should not be lost to the United Nations system as a whole, even if there is no possibility for their recruitment in the organization of their assignment. In that regard, see recommendation 7.

Resources for units running the programmes

88. The organizational units responsible for the operation of the programmes are in most cases part of human resources management. Usually they are specifically dedicated to the JPO Programme and are part of the recruitment or training section. In a few organizations, for historical reasons, these units are part of the technical development and cooperation related departments. In all cases they are small units with a strong service-providing attitude. Usually a "one-stop shop", they are responsible for the in-house planning of the programme, for donor relations including the conclusion of bilateral agreements, and the continuous matching of the organizations' requests with the donors' priorities. They participate in the selection process, organize the induction of the JPOs, and oversee the implementation of the administrative processes with the JPOs.

89. These units generally are of a small size, fully charged with the everyday operation of the programme. Due to the lack of critical mass in a number of organizations, the possibilities of specialization of the units' work is limited, the computerization of the process is weak, and online or real-time operational modules facilitating the work are rare. This is particularly true for the organizations that have a relatively modest number of JPOs. In the course of the interviews, the Inspectors noted that some of these organizations are considering outsourcing part of this work, thus allowing more focus on the donor-organization relationship. In this context, the Inspectors note that the programmes in some organizations with a limited number of JPOs are administered by UNDP JPOSC in Copenhagen, and these clients are satisfied with the services provided.

90. The units responsible for the operation of the programmes are already over-burdened with solving everyday operational problems, while there is an increasing need to pay more attention to the longer-term perspective and efficiency improvement related tasks. During recent years, there has been no evaluation of the programmes run in the organizations; there is no aggregated appraisal of the programmes as a whole, from the point of view of the organizations. There is a very weak or no institutional memory on the experiences of the JPOs; the satisfaction surveys carried out are very rare, and not conducted on a comparable and systematic basis. The Inspectors noted the related efforts in UNDESA, FAO, the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNDP, but with the exception of the latter, the necessary human and financial resources allocated for these activities is not enough.

91. The biennial meeting of the National Recruitment Services and the United Nations organizations has recognized the necessity to make progress in that field and initiated steps to produce standardized statistical and qualitative reports on the programmes, and to elaborate a common and standardized evaluation methodology. Progress in that field is limited, and without the commitment of the higher management of the organizations, as well as without providing additional human and financial resources, these long-term tasks cannot be implemented.

92. According to the original concept, apart from all the direct costs related to the implementation of the JPO Programmes, an agreed 12 per cent of the administrative cost should serve to cover all the administrative and support costs associated with the programmes.

It is 14 per cent when the selection/recruitment process is implemented entirely by the organization on behalf of the donor. UNDP and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs are presently undertaking an exercise to determine the exact administrative costs of the programme. The Inspectors found no precise applicable calculation containing the direct and indirect administrative costs in a single organization.

93. Experts' opinions during the interviews indicated that the direct administrative and support costs associated with the running of the programmes may be covered by the 12 per cent overhead, but some direct costs associated with the programmes have not, to date, been included in the direct costing breakdown, such as provision of IT equipment, office space, etc. However, some organizations emphasized that the portion of costs incurred by the non-headquarters duty station to which the JPO is assigned is also often not included. The budgetary figures for the operation of the UNDP JPOSC in Copenhagen show that the administrative and support costs are covered by the established 12 per cent, which means that the administration of the programmes is "self-financed". It is to be noted that it does not include some indirect costs. Also, UNDP JPOSC is a specialized unit and handles the most JPOs, providing better cost efficiency in administering the programmes.

94. Some interviewees questioned the feasibility, or even the necessity, of calculating the indirect costs (associated with security, field office services, etc.), considering that the United Nations organizations are the clear beneficiaries of the JPO Programmes. However, this approach was characteristic primarily of the United Nations funds and programmes, having a significant portion of voluntary contributions in their budget. A more restrained position was expressed in the organizations having the bulk of money from the regular budget.

95. Speaking to the donor representatives, the Inspectors found no readiness to accept further increases in the administrative and support costs of the programmes. They consider the programmes already expensive, and the issue of the necessity to reduce costs, including administrative and support costs, has already been raised.

96. Since the United Nations organizations are clearly beneficiaries of the JPO Programmes, the Inspectors find it justified that, in the framework of human resources management, adequate human and financial resources should be provided for addressing the long-term tasks related to the programmes. Such steps are required to secure their long-term efficiency, and to better utilize their potential in the future. This requires the modification of the basic parameters of the JPO Programmes, allowing cost sharing of the programme with the organizations (see recommendation 1 above), and also the initiative of the executive heads when they present the human resources management budgetary proposals to their legislative bodies.

The implementation of recommendation 5 below is expected to enhance efficiency.

Recommendation 5

Executive heads should ensure that the units responsible for the operation of the JPO Programmes have adequate mandate and resources for performing in a systematic way the long-term tasks related to these programmes.

Issues requiring a system-wide approach

97. Although at present the JPO Programmes have an outdated and very vague legislative basis, due to the model agreement based bilateral agreements concluded with the donor countries, and the results of informal interactions between the organizations and the donors, the established practice shows many similarities across the system. It is in the interests of the United Nations organizations to strengthen and formalize this emerging practice.

98. The ongoing practice of biennial meetings of the National Recruitment Services and the United Nations organizations has proved to be a helpful tool for identifying and elaborating common answers to a series of common problems, thus giving orientation for the further evolution of the programmes. However, the implementation of the common understandings and decisions arising from this mechanism needs more internal and system-wide support, in order to enable the respective units in the organizations to take the necessary measures in time to follow the agreed direction. A more focused attention to, and formal approval of, these directions at system-wide managerial level would improve the efficiency of achieving the agreed objectives.

99. To have a more systematic monitoring of the satisfaction rate of the donors, the supervisors of the JPOs and of the JPOs themselves would be beneficial for the future implementation of the programmes. The Inspectors found such systematic satisfaction surveys in UNDP, and on an occasional basis in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and WFP. They are of the opinion that it would be desirable to elaborate a unified set of criteria to be applied by all organizations with significant JPO Programmes, in order to carry out systematic monitoring and surveys in the future across the system. This would provide comparable and systematic data on different aspects of the programmes. The elaboration of such criteria could be done through the biennial meeting mechanism, followed by the endorsement of the Human Resources Network (HRN) of CEB. The involvement of the HRN would secure the possibility for a unified practice in that field, and through the heads of human resources management of the organizations, provide the necessary commitment to act accordingly.

100. As discussed above, although the employment of JPOs after the completion of their assignment is not among the primary objectives of the programmes for all the organizations, there is general agreement that the former JPOs with the best performance records are considered a potential source for recruitment. It is in the interests of the system to gain back as much as conditions and regulations permit from the earlier investment of the organizations.

101. Due to the lack of a proper follow-up tracking system of the former JPOs, the Inspectors could not obtain a precise picture on their retention rate in the organizations. Some organizations and donors provided figures on retention, although their data were based on different methodologies. Sometimes only recruitment within one year to a regular post was considered as retention; in other cases, short-term contracts concluded immediately after the JPO assignment were also included. At the Bonn biennial meeting in 2003, efforts were launched in harmonizing the collection of JPO retention rates, but it has not yet resulted in providing a precise and coherent system-wide picture. In general, the retention rate of the former JPOs in different organizations varies from 30 to 80 per cent, and shows significant fluctuations from year to year, subject to the staff dynamics of the organizations. As a general tendency, the United Nations funds and programmes have higher retention rates, due to their increased flexibility on budgetary matters.

102. It is the Inspectors' view that an increased inter-agency flow of information and cooperation among the recruitment services of the United Nations system organizations

would improve the career development possibilities of JPOs finishing their assignment in certain occupational groups, whose original organization had no recruitment possibilities in that period. It was the Inspectors' experience that neither the JPOs nor the human resources services of the organizations have information on the opportunities in the other organizations of the system in that regard. UNDP JPOSC has a database initiative with the aim of career counselling for former JPOs, but it is insufficiently known and under-utilized outside UNDP. The Inspectors offer this initiative to the attention of the HRN of CEB, which is worth further system-wide development and utilization. It is the Inspectors' conviction that, without giving any guarantees for the further employment of the JPOs in the United Nations system organizations, through such a mechanism, experienced personnel, committed to the United Nations objectives and with a high level of knowledge and proven performance, can be made available for the different duty stations and organizations across the system.

The implementation of recommendation 6 below is expected to enhance efficiency; and the implementation of recommendation 7 is expected to enhance coordination and cooperation.

Recommendation 6

The Human Resources Network of CEB should discuss and endorse the unified set of criteria to be applied by all organizations having significant JPO Programmes to carry out the monitoring of the programmes and client satisfaction surveys.

Recommendation 7

The Human Resources Network of CEB should discuss and initiate the establishment of a system-wide tracking and career counselling system for former JPOs and, through an increased flow of information and cooperation among the recruitment services, should make better use across the system of the JPOs who showed a high level of performance during their assignment.

Problems in the present operational practice

103. Interviews with the donors, managers, supervisors and the JPOs themselves confirmed that the programmes are run without major interruption and problems, although some individual problems concerning their implementation were raised. Part of these problems are not specifically related to the JPO Programme but are connected with the general shortcomings of the human resources management or administrative operation of the organization at large, while others need to be addressed through a better monitoring and control mechanism of the implementation of the programmes.

Selection of candidates

104. In the selection process, the common eligibility criteria prevails across the system: academic background equivalent to a Master's degree is a prerequisite, age limit of 32 years with very few exceptions, good command of United Nations languages, plus prior work experience. Subject to the priorities of the donors and to the strength of competition at national level, further academic studies and work experience are elements getting more and

more weight in the selection. In general, the selection procedure is acknowledged as competitive, open and transparent.

105. In most cases the donors provide a shortlist of qualified candidates for final selection; a few countries delegate the entire selection process to the organizations. It is the practice of only one country to provide a single candidate, and in case of non-acceptance, it provides another one. In the final decision the United Nations competency-based interview plays an important role. The organizations did not observe any qualitative differences in the calibre of JPOs, no matter which selection method was used. However, whatever methods are applied, the involvement of the United Nations organizations in the process is of fundamental importance, and the final decision on the recruitment should be done by the organizations. This has been underlined not only by the managers/supervisors but also by the JPOs themselves.

106. Some human resources managers raised the desirability of reorienting the programmes towards their originally envisaged character, and to handle them more as a programme for recently graduated young professionals. It is the Inspectors' view that this would be difficult to do in the circumstances of open and strong competition, which is considered a fundamental value and strength of the programmes. Additionally, the costs per JPO are relatively high (US$ 90,000 to US$ 195,000 per JPO per year, depending on duty station), and to spend this on candidates of a lower calibre would be irrational as well as against the efficiency interests of the organizations.

Induction and orientation training

107. The induction and orientation training courses organized for JPOs by the donor countries, and by the organizations, are generally attended by most JPOs across the system. Some donors organize them on a national level, but a growing number of countries use the services of the United Nations System Staff College in Turin (UNSSC). These induction courses are complemented by pre-departure briefings arranged by the organizations or their regional bureaus. Most organizations help to incorporate new JPOs through arranging one to two week courses in the first six-month period after entry on duty, sometimes together with other newly recruited personnel.

108. The overall purpose of the courses organized by the donor countries is to ensure the quick integration of the JPOs into their respective organization. They provide JPOs with targeted information on the mandate and activity of the United Nations organizations; on the global challenges the international organizations face; on the role, status and work of international civil servants; and on the development policy and operation of the donor country's national machinery. The courses organized by the receiving organizations are more focused on the specific activity of the organization, and the administrative and practical arrangements of assignment. The Inspectors learnt that from the JPOs point of view, there is an increased demand to get more duty station-related practical information before their departure, particularly in the case of field assignments.

109. The Inspectors note that JPOs regard these training courses as of the utmost importance, and not only from the point of view of United Nations system knowledge, workplace skills development and the practical information which is provided. The possibility of direct communication among the newly recruited personnel contributes to the establishment of a useful, system-wide human network among JPOs. The UNSSC training course, with its growing and widening scope of participants, received particularly high recognition in that regard.

110. The Inspectors are of the opinion that in the current circumstances of efforts aiming "to deliver as one", and the desirability to facilitate the inter-agency mobility policy, a harmonized curriculum of the courses for the JPOs would, as a first step, be particularly useful and desirable. Such an initiative should come from the biennial meeting of donors and organizations, and the involvement of the UNSSC, as an institution designed to provide training and learning opportunities for staff at all levels throughout the system, would be particularly useful.

Administrative issues at entry on duty

111. Some of the problems or complaints expressed by JPOs during the interviews are connected with the administrative and other issues related to entry on duty. The only representative statistical data available for the Inspectors[7] in that regard also shows that JPOs have the most frequent complaints on the late or inadequate administrative arrangements at the period of entry on duty. Among the frequently mentioned problems were: slow administrative decisions on recruitment followed by short-notice demand to be at the duty station; late issue of the letter of appointment; lack of information on the precise conditions of service (salary, allowances, benefits); insufficient practical information on living and working conditions in field duty stations; late reception of the first salary and assignment grants; difficulties with provision of office space and equipment upon arrival, and logistical support at the duty station. In most cases these problems are not connected so much with the JPO status of the newcomers, but rather with problems of the system in place, or are the result of human or professional mistakes, inefficient implementation of the existing rules, or the weak performance of the respective administrative units.

112. Often these problems or difficulties could have been avoided by providing better, more targeted and timely information to the JPOs. Therefore, it is important that those units responsible for the operation of the programmes, which have not yet done so, should clearly identify focal points in personnel/human resources or substantive departments, to assist new recruits with all practical information and problem solving. Some organizations provide the newcomers on arrival with information, documentation, circulars and forms on CD-ROM or in other formats. Additionally, a well designed and continuously updated, user-friendly website available for the JPOs can be instrumental in assisting them prior to entry on duty.

Terms of reference, job description

113. The terms of reference (TOR) of the JPOs is a basic document determining in many aspects not only the parameters of selection but also the first period of the work in the duty station. The Inspectors noted that most of the job descriptions for the JPOs follow the standardized form approved by the donors: they are detailed, containing the description of duties and responsibilities, required skills and qualifications, work experience, and the basic parameters of supervision as well as the training and learning elements.

114. The donors are generally satisfied with the information contained in the TORs; the quality control activity of the units in charge of the JPO Programmes plays an important role in that regard. Experience shows that a more general job description elicits more candidates during the application process, while a very specific one may generate fewer candidates, having an impact on the quality of the selection process.

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[7] www.jposc.org JPO Satisfaction survey 2001-2006.

115. Sometimes the TOR does not reflect the real substance of the work to be carried out by the JPO. Due to reasons explained previously, the units are not in a position to make judgements on substantive issues during the quality-control phase, and it is only upon the arrival of the JPO that it is revealed that the job to be performed differs very much from the TOR obtained prior to the assignment. It is obvious that in dynamic organizations, the changing content of the job description can be part of the normal work process, but more attention and control can reduce the number of these cases. In any event, it is also important that any changes or updating of the TOR are carried out in consultation with the JPOs.

Supervision, coaching and training

116. Donors and the JPOs give particular importance to the training and learning elements of the programmes. The quality of supervisory activity is of crucial importance for the success of the programmes. The supervisors, their selection, preparation and performance play a key role in that regard. The Inspectors noted that frequently the lack of proper supervision is one of the main sources of frustration among JPOs. Sometimes the supervisors are not appointed in time; the supervisor changes several times during the assignment; his/her performance is poor; or the supervisors did not receive clearly formulated guidelines and indications of what they were expected to do in this capacity.

117. Donors expect that incentives should be created in the United Nations system to support supervisory activity. The incentives should include supplementary time for coaching JPOs, and the supervisory activity should be part of the individual appraisal of the staff member. The supervisors should be tasked to provide feedback, practical guidance and advice to the JPOs, with a view to strengthening the learning and training elements of the programmes.

118. Most of the supervisors are experienced and committed staff members, dedicating significant energy and time to coach the JPO under his/her supervision. Many of them are former JPOs, having personal inspirations and motivations for that work. However, the Inspectors heard mixed experiences of whether the supervisors receive sufficient guidance or assistance in their work. There is no need for specific training, but to have clearly formulated expectations concerning this type of work, as well as receiving the proper evaluation and recognition for this activity, is an absolute must.

119. Some organizations have developed guidelines on the supervision of JPOs. UNICEF has developed guidelines on supervision and learning/training specifically for JPOs, based on which, units and offices receiving JPOs are required to prepare a detailed supervision and learning plan covering the full duration of the assignment. FAO has issued similar guidelines for supervisors. UNHCR formulated in a letter to the supervisors what the expectations of human resources management are from them. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs prepared and issued a "Note to the executive offices and supervisors" in 2005, which provides guidance, and since 2007, supervisors have had to sign and return a compact as an acknowledgement and a commitment to fulfil their role as supervisors. An expectation letter to the supervisors in UNDP highlighting the specificities of the supervisory activity is being sent to all supervisors, and is available on the UNDP JPOSC website. These are considered good practices, and similar guidelines should also be developed and used for the supervisors in other organizations with a significant JPO Programme.

120. The Inspectors did not see meaningful attempts in the organizations to control or to evaluate the supervisory activity. Usually measures are taken if there is a clearly formulated concrete complaint or request from the donors. Even in the organizations having a significant JPO Programme, there is little or no practice of gathering the lessons learned in this field. It is necessary to strengthen the monitoring and control of the implementation of the supervisory

activity. The experiences gained in the organizations should be summarized and made available for the supervisors with a view to assisting their work.

Career development

121. There is widespread agreement among human resources managers that the JPO Programmes are an excellent potential source or pool of experts for development cooperation and for the activity of the United Nations organizations in general. The United Nations system absorbed 40 per cent of the 620 UNDP JPOs between 2000 and 2006. Former JPOs represent more than 20 per cent of the current UNDP Professional-level staff, and one out of three United Nations Resident Coordinators are former JPOs. Twenty-five (25) per cent of JPOs returned and worked in their national institutions of development cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Economic Cooperation, NGOs, related companies or research institutes).[8]

122. However, in very few organizations does there exist systematic work dealing with the career development or counselling of JPOs, with a view to using their potential in the future within the organization or the system. The work of the units running the JPO Programmes is usually limited to the individual performance appraisal of the JPO for submission to the donors and, in general, more attention is paid to how to obtain new JPOs than how to handle or use this potential in the future. The JPOs receive the support of their supervisors concerning their future career, but little or no attention is observed from human resources management in that regard. From that point of view, the JPOs in UNDP and UNICEF are in a better position, since these organizations have developed policies to handle the JPOs as a potential recruitment source. The recent joint initiative of the Geneva-based organizations, with the participation of WHO, ILO and ITC, on career planning of JPOs is also a promising practice.

Best practices

123. The Inspectors learned that the existing practice of the biennial meeting of National Recruitment Services and the United Nations organizations is a useful tool for the exchange of experience and best practices. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs carries out the secretariat and coordination function for these meetings, which is a demanding job with a significant workload. The donors or other United Nations organizations should use the JPOs working in human resources to better support this work. Such additional support, together with increased attention from the HRN of CEB, would contribute to the better implementation across the system of the decisions taken during these meetings.

124. UNDP has set up a joint service delivery unit for JPOs, called the UNDP JPO Service Centre, in Copenhagen. It is a well-organized, efficient unit run by a young and dynamic team. Staff members at the Professional level are all former JPOs. The UNDP JPOSC is part of human resources management in UNDP, operating on a self-financing basis. Its main role is to provide services to JPOs, donors and country offices, and it constitutes a one-stop shop for donors and for JPOs in all their administrative and financial affairs. It also covers recruitment activity, talent management and career development support, resource mobilization, building of donor partnerships, organizing the database of former and current JPOs and online networking. At present the Service Centre administers 270 JPOs of UNDP and other organizations.

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[8] Data provided by UNDP JPO Service Centre in response to JIU questionnaire.

125. The Inspectors note the high level of computerization of the service-providing activity of UNDP JPOSC, and the availability of real time online access to programme-related information for donors, duty stations and JPOs. They also note the wide use of satisfaction surveys among the major players of the programmes, and the processing and building of the results into a database covering a period of several years. The innovative, new initiatives of the Service Centre like super office (file management of the programmes with less paper), the trial use of Skype communication with JPOs in the field, etc., have received recognition and wider application within the organization. The Service Centre's operation as an independent service provider has proved to be cost effective and it is becoming capable of offering its services to other United Nations organizations, too. In that context, the activity of UNDP JPOSC represents best practice.

126. The Inspectors note the usefulness of the complex, periodic evaluation of the JPO Programmes carried out by the donor countries. Their methodology, scope, basic orientation and conclusions should be used in the future evaluation of the JPO Programmes in the United Nations organizations.

The implementation of recommendation 8 below is expected to enhance controls and compliance; and the implementation of recommendation 9 is expected to enhance effectiveness.

Recommendation 8

The executive heads should ensure that adequate monitoring and controls be in place to secure the implementation of the JPO Programme, including its supervision, training and learning elements.

Recommendation 9

The executive heads should ensure that the various supervisory and administrative aspects of the programmes be supported and implemented by human resources management services taking into account the agreed recommendations of the biennial meetings of the National Recruitment Services and the United Nations organizations on the JPO schemes.

ANNEXES

Annex I

Table 1: Number of JPOs/AEs/APOs in the United Nations system organizations in 2006 and 2007 (figures obtained from the organizations in response to JIU questionnaire)

Organizations	Number of JPOs/AEs/APOs	
	2006	2007
UN - all departments (including UNCTAD and UNODC / UNOV)	151	169
UNDP[9]	175	190
UNEP	31	28
UNFPA	58	63
UN-Habitat	4	4
UNHCR	102	106
UNICEF	96	91
UNRWA	Data not provided	Data not provided
WFP	72	75
FAO	75	67
IAEA	3	10
ICAO	4	3
ILO	37	40
IMO	4	6
ITU	1	1
UNESCO	29	31
UNIDO	8	9
UNWTO	None	None
UPU	1	1
WHO	31	29
WIPO	10	8
WMO	1	2
TOTAL NUMBER OF JPOs/AEs/APOs	**893**	**933**

[9] Including JPOs of affiliated organizations (UNCDF, UNDGO, UNIFEM and UNV).

Annex II

Table 2: JPO/AE/APO statistics from United Nations system organizations with significant programmes (United Nations, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, FAO, IAEA, ILO, UNESCO, WHO)

Number of JPO/AE/APO		By Gender		Assigned to geographical region[10]				Assigned to		Assigned to	
								Headquarters	Country Office	Technical Cooperation projects	Other areas
	Total	Male	Female	Africa	Asia	L. America	Other				
2003	944	340	604	205	174	70	424	333	611	414	530
2004	928	326	602	213	167	67	414	341	587	418	510
2005	913	338	575	243	135	52	413	351	562	405	508
2006	860	305	555	239	129	52	368	322	538	371	489
2007	899	343	556	227	126	59	412	361	538	386	513
TOTAL	**4544**	**1652**	**2892**	**1127**	**731**	**300**	**2031**	**1708**	**2836**	**1994**	**2550**

[10] No data available for the geographical distribution of the 355 WFP JPOs.

Annex II (continued)

Table 2 (contd): JPO/AE/APO statistics from United Nations system organizations with significant programmes (United Nations, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, ``FAO, IAEA, ILO, UNESCO, WHO)

	By nationality		Total of funds for JPO/AE/APO Programmes (in US $)
	Nationals of donor countries	Nationals of developing countries	
2003	879	65	98 239 452
2004	853	75	101 134 575
2005	847	66	101 823 027
2006	811	49	104 694 107
2007	848	51	107 983 053[11]
Total	**4238**	**306**	

[11] Some organizations provided estimates.

Annex III

List of donors[12]

1. Australia[13]
2. Austria
3. Belgium
4. Canada
5. Czech Republic
6. Denmark
7. Finland
8. France
9. Germany
10. Greece
11. Iceland
12. Ireland
13. Italy
14. Japan
15. Kuwait
16. Liechtenstein
17. Luxembourg
18. Monaco
19. Netherlands
20. Nigeria
21. Norway
22. Organisation internationale de la Francophonie[14]
23. Poland
24. Portugal
25. Republic of Korea
26. Saudi Arabia
27. Spain
28. South Africa
29. Sweden
30. Switzerland
31. United Arab Emirates
32. United Kingdom
33. United States of America

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[12] Donors contribute to the JPO Programme of one or more United Nations system organizations.
[13] Discontinued its participation in 2004; discussions are underway to resume it.
[14] Has currently suspended its participation in the programme.

Annex IV

Overview on action to be taken by participating organizations on JIU recommendations
JIU/REP/2008/2

		Intended impact	CEB	United Nations, its funds and programmes											Specialized agencies and IAEA												
				United Nations*	UNCTAD	UNODC	UNEP	UN-HABITAT	UNHCR	UNRWA	UNDP	UNFPA	UNICEF	WFP	ILO	FAO	UNESCO	ICAO	WHO	UPU	ITU	WMO	IMO	WIPO	UNIDO	UNWTO	IAEA
Report	For action		X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X								X
	For information				X					X								X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Recommendation 1		a		L																							
Recommendation 2		d		L																							
Recommendation 3		e		L																							
Recommendation 4		e		E		E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E								E
Recommendation 5		g		E		E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E								E
Recommendation 6		g	E																								
Recommendation 7		c	E																								
Recommendation 8		d		E		E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E								E
Recommendation 9		e		E		E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E								E

Legend: L: Recommendation for decision by legislative organ
E: Recommendation for action by executive head
■: Recommendation does not require action by this organization

Intended impact: **a:** enhanced accountability **b:** dissemination of best practices **c:** enhanced coordination and cooperation **d:** enhanced controls and compliance **e:** enhanced effectiveness **f:** significant financial savings **g:** enhanced efficiency **o:** other

Covers all entities listed in ST/SGB/2002/11 other than UNCTAD, UNODC, UNEP, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNRWA.